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ABSTRACT

This document discusses information pertaining to retention at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC). Several studies have been conducted to gather information on students and discover what factors contribute to their decisions not to return to NVCC. Findings indicated that a large number of students do not return because of life circumstances, such as family responsibilities and financial hardship. However, these students did mention that they planned on returning in the future. Results also showed that approximately one-fifth of students did not return because they transferred or achieved their academic goals. Other findings revealed that students who were placed in program-specific areas were retained at higher rates than students who were placed in non-program-specific areas were, and larger numbers of Hispanic students did not return to NVCC because of financial reasons. NVCC discussed the need for the development of programs that will help students reach their academic goals and increase retention. Efforts must be aimed specifically at those students who can be seen as at-risk for not returning (typically Hispanics and Blacks), and who have work and/or family obligations. This document also covers a review of current literature to determine the best practices for improving retention within the community college. (Contains 30 references.) (CJW)

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STUDENT RETENTION AT NVCC AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

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OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL RESEARCH

The purpose of the Office of Institutional Research is to conduct analytical studies and provide information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation and decision making. In addition, the office provides leadership and support in research related activities to members of the NVCC community engaged in planning and evaluating the institution's success in accomplishing its mission.

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STUDENT RETENTION AT NVCC AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Table of Contents

Abstract

Introduction

Section 1: "Best Practices": Strategies to Improve Student Retention

- Enrollment Management
- Theories of Student Retention
- Methods of Measuring Retention
- Strategies to Improve Retention
- Learning Communities and Retention
- Recruitment and Retention
- Strategies for Improving Adult Student Retention
- Strategies for Improving Minority Student Retention
- Successful Retention Programs
- Conclusion

Section II: Major Findings from Student Retention Studies at NVCC

- NVCC Retention Patterns by Selected Characteristics
- Findings from the NVCC Non-Returning Student Survey
- NVCC Telephone Survey and Focus Group Findings
- NVCC Findings in Relation to Other National Retention Studies
  - Positive Retention Rates
  - Student Goals and Retention Rates
  - External Factors Influencing Retention Rates
  - Student Connection with the School
  - Student Age and Retention Rates
  - Influences of Financial Aid on Retention Rates

Section III: Recommendations for Improvement in Student Retention at NVCC

Works Cited

STUDENT RETENTION AT NVCC AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Abstract

This report is part of a series pertaining to student retention at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC). In an effort to determine the reasons why some students do not return to the institution and whether selected student characteristics are related to retention, several studies were conducted by the Office of Institutional Research (OIR). In order to present an overview of student retention issues at NVCC, this report summarizes some of the key findings from these studies. In addition to providing information on studies conducted at NVCC, several "best practices" and theories on retention are discussed.

Findings from NVCC studies indicate that many students do not return to NVCC because of life circumstances such as family responsibilities, conflicts with employment, financial circumstances, or new employment opportunities. Many of the respondents who cited their current life circumstances as reasons for not returning indicated they planned to return to NVCC in the future. A positive finding from the studies conducted at NVCC was that approximately one-fifth of the students did not return because they had either transferred or achieved their academic goals. Both of these findings are consistent with the fact that NVCC is a two-year institution and that many students enroll at the College with goals that can be met in a short period of time.

Several findings from the NVCC studies were similar to findings on student retention by other researchers. For example, students who were program placed returned to NVCC at higher rates than non-program placed students. This finding supports the theory that students who are academically integrated with an institution are retained at higher levels. Another finding from NVCC research that is congruent with other national studies was that a higher proportion of Hispanic students, as compared to other students, are not returning to the College due to their financial circumstances.

To improve retention at NVCC, programs reflecting the needs and circumstances of NVCC students must be designed and implemented to help students reach their academic goals. Critical information on student services needs to be clearly and effectively communicated to new students. Efforts must also be made to increase retention for Hispanic and Black students. In addition, the College needs to expand its programs to assist students with work and family obligations, so that they may reach their academic objectives.

STUDENT RETENTION AT NVCC AND STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

Introduction

This report is part of a series on student retention at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC). The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) conducted several studies on the retention of first-time students enrolled at the College. The main purpose of the studies was to determine the reasons why students do not return to the College and to evaluate if selected student characteristics influence retention.

Survey research was conducted to understand the reasons that influenced students' decisions not to return to NVCC.[1] Telephone surveys were conducted and focus groups were convened to gather qualitative data on what students believed were the strengths and weaknesses of their NVCC education, what factors contributed in their decision not to return, and what NVCC could have done to enable the student to re-enroll.[2] An additional study sought to determine the relationship between selected student characteristics and retention rates. These characteristics were students' educational objectives, program placement and award type, the age of the students, enrollment status (full-time vs. part-time), and time of attendance (day vs. night).[3]

In addition to the various studies on student retention at NVCC, a literature review was carried out in order to update NVCC's knowledge of some of the "best practices" regarding retention. Many theorists have determined key factors in both retaining students and in predicting student retention rates. The literature review also revealed some of the innovative retention programs and policies being implemented at various colleges and universities. By understanding different theories and practices, NVCC can improve its efforts in increasing student retention.

This report is divided into three sections. **Section 1** presents a literature review on retention theories and "best practices" being conducted by other colleges and universities. Topics include theories of retention, strategies to improve retention, minority student retention, and others. **Section 2** provides a brief description of three studies conducted by NVCC that evaluated student retention. Some of the key findings from the NVCC studies are also compared to other researcher's theories on student retention. **Section 3** proposes recommendations for ways to increase retention at NVCC. These recommendations are by no means comprehensive or final, but are offered for the purpose of triggering meaningful discussions and plans for action at NVCC.

SECTION I:

"BEST PRACTICES": STRATEGIES TO IMPROVE STUDENT RETENTION

Section 1: "Best Practices": Strategies to Improve Student Retention

High levels of attrition can have a large, negative impact upon a college's funding, facilities, planning, and long-term curriculum planning. Learning more about the factors that affect retention and about ways and means of improving retention can help institutions avoid the high costs of high attrition rates. With an increased understanding of why some students persist and others do not, strategies for improving student retention can be devised to enable more students to succeed in reaching their educational goals. Individuals as well as institutions benefit from finding ways to improve student retention.

Many individuals face barriers to success in college. Barriers such as inadequate financial resources, lack of preparedness, racial and gender bias, or a lack of family or peer support are all factors that can adversely affect students' ability to obtain the post-secondary training and education they want.

Community colleges can help individuals overcome some barriers to success in college, beginning with open enrollment policies. Community colleges have become "an educational melting pot" due to open admissions and ease of accessibility (Seidman, The Community College 1). Access, alone, however, may not be enough. The particular needs and circumstances of an increasingly diverse population must be identified and addressed by the colleges. In 1997, 46% of all minority students who were enrolled in an institution of higher education were attending two-year colleges. In the same year, women made up 58% of the community college enrollments (Foote 1). Because of open enrollment policies, often coupled with low tuition rates, community colleges also enroll a relatively high level of "at-risk" students, such as students from some minority groups, students with disabilities, students from low-income families, or first-generation students whose parents never attended college. These students have above-normal risks of low grade point averages and of not completing college. Community colleges also enroll large numbers of non-traditional students, whose retention rates tend to be lower than that of traditional students.

Many community colleges saw an increase in the number of dropouts during the 1980's and early 1990's. A 1998 study reported that there was a 46% dropout rate for open enrollment institutions (Reisberg A55).[4] In 1999, ACT reported a 46% dropout rate for students enrolled in public two-year institutions and a 30% dropout rate for private two-year institutions. In addition, ACT reported the national graduation rate for students at public, two-year institutions as 34% (ACT Institutional Data File, 1999). As can be seen from these statistics and others, high attrition rates are a nationwide problem of major proportions. Retaining students at as high a rate as possible is critical both for education institutions and the students who attend them. Researchers have long studied the problem and continue to do so. At institutions of higher education, enrollment management and student retention strategies are employed in ongoing efforts to improve student retention.

Enrollment Management

Enrollment management is a methodology by which higher education institutions control the size, shape, and character of their student bodies. It begins with the president of the institution and extends through the entire organization. Enrollment management is a comprehensive process employed to achieve and maintain student recruitment, retention, and graduation rates. The primary goals of enrollment management include stabilizing enrollments, linking student service programs and academic programs, maintaining institutional finances, improving student services, and responding to economic forces. It is a planned effort, which takes full implementation and long-term commitments in order to be effective.

According to Frank Kemerer of North Texas State University, enrollment management is made up of several activities. These activities include long range planning, program development, clear mission

statements, marketing efforts, and recruitment. In addition, Kreutner and Godfrey define enrollment management as planned activities, which can control an institution's future. The four primary components of enrollment management are 1) marketing services 2) enrollment services 3) retention services and 4) research services (Mabry 2).

Theories of Student Retention

One of the most prominent theorists on student retention is Vincent Tinto. Tinto's theory of student retention was first published in 1975 and has been widely tested and accepted by the educational community. The Tinto model states that individuals possess pre-entry college attributes including such things as family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling. These attributes influence individuals' choice of goals and commitments. Institutional experiences then interact with students' goals and commitments. Whether a student departs from an institution is largely a result of the extent to which the student becomes academically and socially connected with the institution.

The Tinto model was developed primarily for student retention issues at four-year colleges. In 1990, Halpin and Altinasi tested Tinto's model on two-year, non-residential, open-door community colleges. The results were very similar to the results from Tinto's model, showing that retention is a complex issue involving many variables. In particular, retention is influenced by the interplay of student attributes and beliefs with institutional characteristics.

Models similar to Tinto's have been proposed and tested by other theorists. Pascarella and Terenzini (1979) stated that the absence of significant interactions with other college members is the single leading predictor of college attrition. Student interaction must go beyond the classroom in order for students to feel integrated. Integration is an important component for retaining all students, and it is particularly important in retaining minority students. For Black students, Braddock (1998) found that the amount of faculty contact affects retention and academic performance. This was especially true for Black students enrolled at predominately White institutions.

A study conducted by Okun & Benin in 1996 analyzed retention rates for two groups of community college students. The two groups were those students with plans to persist and those students with plans to transfer. The results of the study showed that the best indicators of persistence were higher GPA upon entry to the institution, enrollment in several classes, intention to persist at entrance, and encouragement from family and peers to continue in their studies. The findings of the study also show that student characteristics have a very strong influence over retention at community colleges. Community colleges can influence persistence levels by encouraging students to take more classes and by strengthening family and peer support systems.

Methods of Measuring Retention

According to Tinto, student persistence can be measured or defined as either program, student, or course retention. Program retention is the traditional way to evaluate attrition rates, in which full-time, first-time students are evaluated. Program retention measures whether or not the student graduated in the major intended at entrance. Student retention evaluates whether or not students attained their personal and/or academic goals upon exiting the college. This type of data is more difficult to obtain because it relies on questionnaire data, since some students do not have to obtain a degree in order to attain their personal goals. Course retention is measured by determining the number of students enrolled in a particular course and then evaluating how many students successfully completed the course. This method gives a bigger picture and does not distinguish between full- and part-time students. Courses with higher than average attrition rates can be examined and analyzed. This methodology can provide very useful data to a college.

Strategies to Improve Retention

Ernest Pascarella states there are several steps that organizations must take in order to produce

effective retention programs. First, retention efforts must be systematic throughout the entire organization. One effective method to achieve this is to develop college-wide task forces pertaining to retention. This ensures that retention efforts are pervasive throughout the organization. Second, on-going research pertaining to student behaviors must be conducted. Rather than just proposing ideas or theories regarding student behaviors, the organization must find out what students are actually doing. Third, the institution must determine which factors in the organization correlate to student persistence or withdrawal. Administrators need to find the specific, unique factors influencing retention at their institution. Fourth, retention interventions need to be developed and their implementation verified. Fifth, the retention interventions should be evaluated, with attention given to both the indirect and direct effects of the programs. Lastly, Pascarella states that it is important for organizations to realize that not all attrition is negative. For example, many students who enroll at community colleges intend to transfer to other institutions, in which case attrition is considered positive.

There are many factors that have been found to influence retention and to be strongly associated with student persistence. These factors include initial student commitments, peer support, involvement in the institution's academic life, and frequency and quality of faculty-student interaction. A closer examination of these variables shows that their influence on student retention varies substantially among institutions. Practices that have increased student persistence at one institution cannot be automatically applied at other institutions. Higher education organizations need to analyze the specific qualities and characteristics of their own students. The most beneficial and effective retention programs are those that are developed over time and are based on coordinated activities of continuous research, evaluation, and policy development.
There are three general levels of retention efforts that both institutions and students can employ: the student level, the institutional level, and the community level. At the student level students must be challenged to develop both academic and non-academic skills that they need for college. At the institutional level teachers and administrators participate in behaviors that facilitate persistence and program completion. In addition, institutions must make commitments to students by providing financial assistance. The community level incorporates businesses, which form partnerships with colleges in order to assist at-risk students.

In 1993, Seidman presented a methodology to evaluate student outcomes at community colleges. The methodology recognizes that students attend community colleges for various reasons, not just to receive degrees. An important element in Seidman's methodology includes learning as much as possible about new students, so that programs can be created or modified to meet their needs. College application forms should be designed to collect data on the goals of students and their academic, social, economic, and family backgrounds. High schools should also provide information to community colleges. Obtaining information early can help students find the proper support systems and programs. Early information also allows the college to develop appropriate programs.

Many institutions have developed and integrated different tools to help improve student retention. Orientation classes and programs are common retention devices. Orientation programs can provide students with vital information important for their academic socialization. A study conducted by Glass and Garrett (1995) at four community colleges in North Carolina found that completing an orientation course (during the first semester of enrollment) improved retention rates regardless of the gender, race, major, age, or employment status of the students (Brawer 1).

Peer and faculty mentoring programs have also been found to be effective retention strategies. Many peer mentoring programs focus on providing social and academic support. For example, Valencia Community College found that when faculty mentoring was combined with student orientation courses, student retention rates increased by 10% more than when orientation courses alone were used (Brawer 1).

Many higher education institutions use multiple strategies to increase student retention rates. Multiple strategies might include combining orientation programs, mentoring programs, and faculty training. Allegheny Community College proposed a multiple strategy to improve retention. Activities included

establishing a women's center, conducting freshman seminars to promote relationships among students and faculty, creating college funded work-study programs for on-campus employment, beginning faculty development programs, and creating additional student organizations (Brawer 2).

Many colleges try to get freshman students involved in campus activities with the expectation that involving students in campus activities will increase persistence rates. Southwest Texas State University began a leadership program for Hispanic students. The program targeted Hispanic students because they were leaving the University in higher proportions than other freshmen. The program consisted of Hispanic upperclassmen and Hispanic faculty members helping incoming freshmen adjust to college life. Since the program began, retention of Hispanic freshmen students (from freshman to sophomore) increased from 58% in 1995 to 68% in 1997 (Reisberg A55).

Attrition is believed to be caused by an extremely complex interaction of a multitude of variables, not just academics. When colleges try to attribute low retention rates to one variable, efforts usually fail. Literature findings state that students at community colleges are four times more likely to leave school due to non-academic reasons than for academic reasons (Jones, Steven 15). The challenge for community colleges is to increase the number of first-time students and returning students (re-enrollment) without establishing costly, labor-intensive programs. Colleges should make faculty and staff aware of high risk students. One way to do this is to hold workshops on high risk students where strategies to help these students can be discussed. If faculty and staff are aware of students at high risk, intervention techniques can be used. In addition, the high cost of student attrition should be made known to all faculty and staff. Steven Jones, in his article titled, "No Magic Required: Reducing Freshman Attrition at Community Colleges," suggests calculating the FTES who have dropped out of the last four freshmen classes. This figure should include both full-time and part-time students for not only lost tuition funds, but also formula funding revenues as well. By placing a dollar value on attrition, many faculty and staff will become more committed to retention strategies and programs. Colleges need to recognize that simply having retention programs in place does not automatically increase student persistence levels. Programs must be delivered in a timely manner and with appropriate attitudes if retention programs are to succeed.

Learning Communities and Retention

Although retention research and findings have been published over the past twenty years, there has been little change in retention rates for either four-year or two-year institutions. Student development departments have changed in order to retain students, but there has been little change in academic practices designed to promote higher levels of student retention. In general, education has been unaffected by research that has been conducted on student persistence.

It has been found that both academic and social involvement is important for students. In particular, involvement matters most during the first year of enrollment. Nearly 50% of all students who withdraw from college do so before the start of the second year (Brawer 1). The more academically and socially involved students are on campus, the more likely they will be to persist with their college studies. Academic and social integration often influences retention in different ways for different people. Overall, academic integration appears to be the more important form of involvement, especially for students enrolled at two-year institutions. This is because classrooms and labs are typically the primary place for social integration at two-year institutions. Academic involvement at two-year institutions should be exceptionally strong because many students do not participate in social activities typically found in four-year colleges.

In his report titled "Colleges as Communities: Taking Research on Student Persistence Seriously," Vincent Tinto suggests that colleges should adopt a community model of academic organization in which shared, connected learning experiences are promoted. The "community model of academics" as it is referred to, would have forms of academic instruction that require students to interact with other students in learning. An example is "learning communities" where students register for a block of classes together. The same students take two or more courses together and form a study team. The

courses are connected by a theme. By enrolling in courses together, students share a coherent educational experience. Students in learning communities form supportive peer groups, which help them to become both academically and socially connected. This is especially helpful for students who commute to college and for those students who face barriers to success in higher education.

For commuting and non-traditional students enrolled at two-year institutions, retention strategies must be applied in the classroom. The classroom is the only place where these students and faculty meet. Retention programs that occur outside of the classroom do not typically reach all of the students who could benefit.

In addition to providing shared learning experiences for students, faculty must also have shared learning opportunities. Institutions must remove barriers that prevent faculty collaborations across departments. Faculty must be able to easily access shared learning experiences and be able to support each other in the process of educational reforms.

An example of a learning community is at Seattle Central Community College, where students can enroll in the Coordinated Studies Program. Enrollees take courses together and then the group meets two or three times a week, for 4 to 6 hours per meeting. The students in the Coordinated Studies Program were retained at a rate approximately 25% higher than students enrolled in traditional curriculums (Tinto, Colleges As Communities 4).

After evaluating a rising trend in student attrition rates, Old Dominion University in Virginia implemented learning communities for freshman students. Many of the students were identified as "at-risk" based on a freshman survey. Learning communities were formed based on freshman English composition courses. The success of the learning communities increased retention, with the student attrition levels decreasing from 33% in 1995 to 24% in 1998 (Virginia Assessment Group).

Recruitment and Retention

Research has shown that students will persist at a college if there is a high level of congruence between the student's values, goals, and attitudes and those of the college. The admissions process and materials can be a key factor in developing students' expectations of the institution and in their adjustment to college environments. Many prestigious private and public universities report a high rate of retention, which can be partially attributed to the students' self-selection. Self-selection increases the compatibility between the student and the institution, thus increasing retention rates (Seidman, Recruitment Begins with Retention 1). Colleges should improve the information they disseminate to prospective students. This, in turn, will allow students to make a more accurate selection on which colleges to attend, and therefore increase retention rates.

Tinto and Wallace (1986) and Grites (1979) found that institutional/student congruence or "fit" could be done at the time of college selection. This "fit" can minimize the chance of a student choosing the wrong institution and thus increase retention rates. Tinto and Wallace also found that admissions officers should inform students and help them to have reasonable expectations regarding their education. This will help prevent student disappointment with the institution after enrollment. The recruitment process is related to retention efforts, with admissions officers playing an important role.

Alan Seidman conducted a study to measure the positive effects of both pre-admission and post-admission counseling for students enrolled in two-year community colleges. According to Seidman, "Matching student attributes with institutional attributes will contribute to student satisfaction with the institution. This in turn, will reflect positively on the institution as satisfied customers relate their positive experiences to others" (Seidman, Recruitment Begins With Retention 4). Seidman states that the retention process begins with the admissions process. The information disseminated by the admissions office is critical in a student's adjustment to the institution. The findings from the study indicated that students who received pre-admission and post-admission counseling had a higher degree of success than those students who did not receive counseling. Students who received

counseling returned for the second semester of enrollment (spring) at a slightly higher rate than the control group (87% to 85% respectively). By the third semester of enrollment (fall), there was a larger difference in retention rates. Students who received counseling returned at a 88% rate compared to the control group which had a 68% return rate. These findings agreed with other studies and literature reviews, which state that academic advising programs help to increase retention rates. In particular, Seidman's study showed that pre-admission and post-admission counseling and orientation produces higher retention rates over multiple semesters.

Strategies for Improving Adult Student Retention

Unlike traditional students, adult learners usually do not live on campus, many are married with children, and most work full time. Most adult learners have very little social interaction at college; instead, they have social links to organizations outside of the college community. Therefore, it is very important for colleges to integrate adult students into on-campus social activities.

A second characteristic of adult learners is that career advancement is usually the primary motivation for attending college. Therefore, having a "career culture" at college may be a key factor in retaining adult students. Usually, career advancement is a more motivating factor for adult students than the need for growth or self-development. Ashar and Skenes tested Tinto's model on adult students. The results showed that fostering social interaction and the social environment needs to take place in the classroom. If social interaction occurs in the class setting, retention will increase.

Retention must be re-defined from the traditional definition of program completion when dealing with adult students. Degree completion is the goal for some but not all adult students. Adults are generally more concerned with the "hands-on" applicability of a degree, have a greater sense of responsibility than younger students, and have more varied experiences to draw upon.

Adult student persistence is affected by such things as time management, family and work needs, economic barriers, and logistics. Several theorists have developed ideas pertaining to adult student retention. Stark states that for adult students, it is more important to define "academic integration as intellectual development rather than good grades." Furthermore, social integration means group work, studying together, and contact with fellow students rather than joining social groups or campus activities (Kerka 2).

Retention is a result of a combination of circumstances, student characteristics, and the institutional environment. For educators, the most viable way to improve retention is to modify the institutional environment. Pappas and Loring (1985) have proposed defining retention for adults in a cross-sectional perspective. This view would consider adult retention successful if students achieve their own objectives for attending college, whether or not that included obtaining a degree.

Both adult students and institutions can engage in activities that increase student retention rates. Adults can overcome retention barriers by focusing on their role as students. Institutions of higher education can assist adults in overcoming retention barriers through several activities. These activities might include assuring close correspondence and monitoring of both instructional and student objectives, providing faculty training in adult student education, offering more courses in the evenings and weekends, expanding course locations, and giving credit for prior learning experiences.

According to Kerka, there are three important strategies for retaining adult students. First, it should be recognized that diverse groups of students are retained by different methods. Second, either before or after enrollment, adult students should be encouraged to clarify career and academic goals. Third, institutions should recognize that not all students' objectives include obtaining a degree and that measuring retention success should take that into account.

Strategies for Improving Minority Student Retention

Approximately 56% of all college-bound Hispanic students attend community colleges (Avalos 1). However, relatively few of the 56% of Hispanic students obtain a postsecondary degree, making retention and transfer issues very important (Avalos 1). Fields (1988) found that some of the reasons for attrition of Hispanic students included financial reasons, lack of motivation, time conflicts, lack of academic preparation, and inability to cope with college demands. Walker (1988) looked at 145 community colleges to see how they were improving retention rates for Hispanic students. The majority of the retention increases were due to financial aid grants, career counseling in selective programs, and participation in ESL and Hispanic studies classes (Avalos 1).

It has been found that the two main factors that influence Hispanic student retention, are financial aid and academic support. A study conducted by Amaury Nora, evaluated whether campus and non-campus based financial aid influenced Hispanic student retention at community colleges. Both of these factors (campus and non-campus based financial support) were found to be significant in retention. The findings indicate that Hispanic students withdraw from college because of financial reasons more than for academic reasons. Nora stated that Hispanic students who were enrolled in more semesters, earned more credits, and received some type of credentials were those that received higher levels of non-campus and campus-based financial aid (327). Another study conducted by Olivas found that Hispanic students with financial aid were uninformed about their parents' income levels. In addition, many students overestimated their parents' income, thus reducing their financial aid award amounts. Also, a large proportion of the Hispanic students held Pell Grants as their form of financial aid, causing them to rely heavily on federal monies and thus be subject to federal cutbacks. When federal aid cuts have occurred, they have disproportionally affected Hispanic students.

Colleges must consider the nature of Hispanic community college students. Many two-year college students who are Hispanic come from lower socioeconomic families and from families where "college attendance has not been firmly established" (Nora 327). Colleges need to develop a comprehensive financial aid plan for students. Financial aid opportunities need to be widely publicized and marketed, especially towards minority students and their parents. Parents and students should also be informed about the importance of correctly filling out financial aid applications and the importance of selecting a comprehensive financial aid package.

Transfer is often cited as an issue in retention of Hispanic community college students. In order to improve transfer rates for Hispanic students, Cohen (1984) suggested several actions. These include the following: strengthening articulation agreements with four-year institutions, implementing stronger counseling and remediation services, and improving special activities for Hispanic students that increase peer support (Avalos 2).

Two successful retention programs described by Avalos include the Puente Project and the Enlace Program. The Puente Project employs Hispanic counselors, specially trained English instructors, and Hispanic professionals who act as mentors. Both of these programs provide Hispanic students with nontraditional individualized academic instruction, counseling, and personal contact with Hispanic professionals as mentors. The Puente Project has been implemented in 23 California community colleges. Students are admitted to the program by placing them in a remedial level English course. The main portion of the program centers on a two-semester sequence of English courses taught by an English instructor and a Hispanic counselor. The students enrolled in the Puente Project are also assigned mentors within the Hispanic community who have similar occupational interests. In addition, Puente students also have a very strong peer support system.

Raymond Padella and Jesus Trevino conducted a study examining the successful behavior traits of minority students who remained in college. Instead of focusing on why students drop out, this study examined the positive attributes of graduates and what actions minority students took in order to graduate from college. The study determined four barriers that minority students had to overcome in order to remain in college. The barriers included: discontinuity (e.g., rural to urban transition), lack of nurturing (e.g., lack of family support, lack of minority role models), lack of presence (e.g., cultural isolation, lack of minority issues in curriculums), and lack of resources (e.g., lack of money, unfamiliarity

with financial aid system). Successful minority students took actions and practiced certain behaviors in order to overcome these barriers. These actions included building a support system by creating or joining clubs, increasing independence by making their own decisions and taking reasonable risks, and conducting research on the profitability of their chosen majors or careers.

Brent Mallinckrodt studied differences in the retention of Black and White students. In an article titled "Student Retention, Social Support, and Dropout Intention: Comparison of Black and White Students," he reports on his study of Black and White students in a four-year university. This study was designed to determine what factors influenced student retention. The study found that the most effective methods of increasing retention rates differed between Black and White students. It was determined that family support was the most important factor for White student retention. Conversely, campus support (faculty, staff, peers) was found to be the most important support system for Black students. In particular, "groups that provide strong peer support as well as concrete survival skills for new Black students may be one of the most effective ways of helping these students cope with the stresses of adjusting to college" (Mallinckrodt 64).

Successful Retention Programs

Many community colleges have implemented successful programs in order to increase retention. One example is at St. Louis Community College. This college sent letters to all non-returning students encouraging them to return. A first letter told students that they were missed during the spring semester; a second letter reminded the students of fall registration deadlines. The enrollment rates for students who received the letters increased significantly. In addition, the college surveyed non-returning students and found that many of them had achieved their educational goal. Students who indicated that they would be returning were also re-classified as "stopouts" and targeted for retention intervention strategies.

Another institution implementing effective retention programs is Del Mar College of Texas. A survey of students who attended fall 1990 but not spring 1991 indicated the two most important reasons for enrolling at the school were to "meet interesting people" and for "personal improvement." The college realized that the social and cultural environment was important and that there needed to be a "personal touch" between the students and the institution. The college recommended strategies including using student government organizations to discover student needs, establishing standardized educational plans for undeclared majors, having a public relations staff to assist students with first-time registration questions, and providing training sessions to show students how to locate services using the college catalog. In addition, the college recommended an aggressive study skills program and required students to meet face-to-face with instructors before dropping courses.

The Pennsylvania College of Technology has also had retention increases due to new programs. Studies have shown that students form their feelings about an institution within the first week of enrollment. Therefore, Pennsylvania College of Technology attempts to retain students and aid in their transition to college within this first week of enrollment. Testing, advising, and scheduling all occur on the first day of school. In addition, ID cards, campus tours, fee payments, and other services are explained on the first day. College administrators also call students who do not attend orientation and ask if they wish to reschedule (Ignash 2).

Miami-Dade Community College uses a "sorting" and "supporting" procedure in order to increase student retention. "Sorting" refers to placing students into the proper class based on assessment test scores in math, reading, and writing. "Supporting" refers to supporting students throughout their academic program by outreach programs. One strategy employed by Miami-Dade Community College is to attempt to contact students when they miss classes. A second strategy is to show students what classes they have completed and what classes are still required in order to complete their program. This is done through a computerized Advisement and Graduation Information System (AGIS).

A national program to assist students with college persistence is the Student Support Services (SSS)

program administered by the Department of Education. The main purpose of the program is to help improve retention and graduation rates of disadvantaged college students. The SSS Program provides participants with academic and non-academic supplemental services. Examples include tutoring, career and personal counseling, academic counseling, and remedial assistance. Currently there are over 700 SSS projects, serving 165,000 college students. The program assists students from low income families, students with disabilities, and students where neither parent has graduated from college. In 1994, 43% of the SSS budget was for two-year colleges and 57% was for four-year colleges, with an estimated annual expenditure per student of approximately $860 (National Study of Student Support Services 1).

After three years of program implementation, the SSS programs were found to be effective in targeting disadvantaged students and providing help beyond the typical services that students normally accessed. After three years of implementation, approximately 58% of the students who began at two-year institutions were still enrolled at a college (either the same institution where they began or another college). Retention (for SSS participants) at the same institution from the first to second year increased by 7%, and by 9% from the second year to the third year (National Study of Student Support Services 3). The effective processes, activities, and services helping SSS participants included peer tutoring, instructional courses and workshops, and cultural events. In particular, peer tutoring showed a statistically significant positive effect on student retention levels.

Conclusion

As has been shown, there are several prominent theories on student retention. The Tinto model is one of the most widely accepted models on student retention for both two-year and four-year institutions. This model states that pre-enrollment attributes such as family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling shape students' goals and commitments. The interaction between students' goals and commitments and their institutional experiences affects persistence and the extent to which students become academically and socially connected to the institution.

Following Tinto's theories of student retention, it has been shown that institutions must identify high risk students, improve faculty-student contacts, and improve academic integration for students. In particular, community colleges should focus attention on adult students and minority students because they make up a larger proportion of the student population at community colleges compared to four-year institutions.

There are many specific strategies which community colleges have developed and implemented in order to improve student retention rates. Literature and experience have shown that any one solution will not work for every institution. It is vital that colleges conduct research and develop strategies suited to improving student persistence at their own institution.

SECTION II:

MAJOR FINDINGS FROM STUDENT RETENTION STUDIES AT NVCC

Section II: Major Findings from Student Retention Studies at NVCC

In an effort to evaluate student retention at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) conducted several analyses. The intent of the analyses was to determine why students do not return to the College and to identify groups of students who have had either traditionally low or high retention rates. By determining the various reasons that students do not return, the College can institute policies and practices to aid students in attaining their educational objectives.

Student retention can be defined by a wide variety of methods, including program retention and student retention. As defined by Vincent Tinto, program retention examines whether a full-time, first-time student graduates in a major selected when he/she first enrolls at the institution. Student retention evaluates whether students attain their personal goals while enrolled at a college or university. The Office of Institutional Research at NVCC examined retention rates according to these two definitions. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected in order to determine retention rates for groups of NVCC students and to determine why students leave the institution. The following sections provide summary information on three NVCC studies pertaining to retention and how the findings relate to retention theories.

NVCC Retention Patterns by Selected Characteristics

The Office of Institutional Research (OIR) conducted an evaluation of the retention rates for first-time students to determine whether selected student characteristics influenced retention. The evaluation examined the relationship between retention and characteristics such as educational objectives, program placement and award type, student age, enrollment status, and time of class attendance. The analysis pertained only to first-time students who attended NVCC for one semester (fall) and who did not return the following spring semester.[5]

Students who indicated that transferring to another institution was their primary educational objective had a high retention rate of 64%. This contrasts sharply with the retention rate (37%) of students who indicated that their educational objective was self-improvement. In addition, students who indicated they would be enrolling at NVCC for three to four semesters had high retention rates of approximately 65%. In contrast, 30% of the students who indicated they would only be enrolled at NVCC for one semester returned. These retention rates indicate that students who are attending NVCC for personal enrichment reasons are generally not returning at high rates as compared to students who have longer term academic goals such as transferring. This trend is not necessarily negative for NVCC. Institutions with open-enrollment policies have many students who attend for personal enrichment reasons; low retention rates are not necessarily a poor reflection of the institution as students frequently meet their objectives in a short period of time.

Students at NVCC who were program placed in their first semester of enrollment had higher retention rates than non-program placed students. The highest retention rates were for students enrolled in an Associate in Science degree program (65%). The retention rate for students who did not select a program was less than 51%. By encouraging first-time students to select a program, NVCC may be able to increase student retention rates.

In general, younger students returned to NVCC at a higher rate than older students. Students 21 years of age and younger had an overall retention rate of 66%. This compares to a retention rate of 40% for students 45 years of age and older. The lower retention rate of older students could reflect the tendency of older students to enroll for purposes of personal enrichment or for upgrading job skills, purposes that require only short periods of time at NVCC. Lower retention rates might also reflect the heavier work and family commitments of older students.

Students who were enrolled full-time had higher retention rates than part-time students. This factor was true regardless of the students' age. Specifically, full-time students had a retention rate of approximately 75% compared to part-time students who had a retention rate of 44%. In particular, full-time students who were 21 years of age and younger had one of the highest retention rates at 77%.

An analysis of student retention rates at NVCC by time of class attendance, indicated that students who attended both day and night classes had high retention rates. Sixty-seven percent of the students who attended both day and night classes returned the following spring semester compared to 39% of the students enrolled only in night classes.

Findings from the NVCC Non-Returning Student Survey

The Non-Returning Student Survey was administered to first-time students who attended NVCC in the fall 1999 semester and who did not return for the following spring semester. Mail and telephone surveys were conducted in order to obtain extensive qualitative data from non-returning students. The survey asked respondents to cite all of their reasons for not continuing at NVCC, their most important reason for not returning, and whether their main reason for not returning was either permanent or temporary. Respondents were also asked whether there was a possibility of returning to NVCC, and if there was a possibility of attending another college. In addition, the survey presented two open-ended questions asking the respondents if there was anything NVCC could have done to help them continue their education and if they had any comments for College administrators.[6]

When respondents were asked to indicate all of the reasons why they did not return to NVCC, the two most frequently given responses were financial reasons (20% of the respondents) and family or personal reasons (20% of the respondents). In addition, 17% of the respondents stated that conflict with employment was why they were not able to continue studying at NVCC, and 13% stated new employment opportunities were a reason for not returning. A low percentage of respondents did not return to NVCC because they were disappointed with courses, instructors, College personnel, or facilities. It is important to note that the majority of the respondents indicated that their reasons for not returning to NVCC were related to their present life circumstances and not to dissatisfaction with the College.

Respondents were also asked to indicate the single most important reason for not returning to NVCC. The largest percentage of the respondents (15%) stated the main reason for not returning was due to family or personal circumstances. This was closely followed by 14% of the respondents who indicated their primary reason for not returning was due to financial circumstances and 10% who indicated conflicts with employment prevented them from returning.

The majority of the respondents (67%) stated their primary reason for not returning to NVCC was temporary in nature. In addition, 63% of the respondents stated there was a possibility of returning to NVCC and 48% stated there was a possibility of attending another college in the future.

When the Non-Returning Student Survey data were analyzed by selected student characteristics, respondents' primary reasons for not returning to NVCC varied according to gender, race, age, and educational objective. Overall, financial circumstances were the most frequently indicated reason stated by male respondents. In contrast, female respondents more frequently indicated family or personal circumstances as the primary reason for discontinuing their studies.

The primary reasons for not returning to NVCC also differed by the race of the respondents. For example, 18% of the Asian respondents indicated transfer as their primary reason for not returning. This differs from Black respondents, where only 3% stated that transferring was their primary reason for not returning. Differences also existed between respondents in different racial categories who did not return due to financial reasons. Twenty percent of the Hispanic respondents stated financial issues were the main reason for not returning, compared to 13% of the White respondents.

For Non-Returning Student Survey respondents between 18 and 24 years of age, the most important reason for not returning was inadequate finances. However, for respondents between 25 and 44 years of age, both conflicts with employment and family/personal circumstances were the most frequently cited reasons for not returning.

Upon enrolling at NVCC, a student is asked to indicate his/her educational objective. The responses to the Non-Returning Student Survey were analyzed by the educational objective given by the respondent. The findings from the analysis demonstrated that educational objectives affected retention for some NVCC students. For example, approximately 15% of the students, who indicated transfer as their educational objective, did not return to NVCC because they had transferred to another school (as they intended). In addition, of the respondents whose educational objective was self-improvement, 19% did not return to NVCC because they had achieved their educational goal.

NVCC Telephone Survey and Focus Group Findings

In order to obtain qualitative data on student retention, the Office of Institutional Research conducted telephone surveys and focus groups of non-returning students. The survey sample and focus groups consisted of individuals who attended NVCC for the first time during the fall 1999 semester and who did not return the following semester (spring 2000). Results from both the telephone surveys and focus groups were very similar to that of the Non-Returning Student Survey that was mailed.[7] Four hundred and ninety-four non-returning students were contacted and participated in the telephone survey. In addition to asking the same questions included on the mail survey, respondents were asked to provide information on why they did not return to NVCC, what the College could have done to assist them in their studies, and if they had any comments or suggestions for College administrators.

A major finding from the telephone survey showed that approximately one fifth of the respondents did not return to NVCC because they had either transferred to another institution or had achieved their academic goals.

The majority of the respondents to the telephone survey did not return to NVCC due to their life circumstances. The most frequently stated life circumstances that influenced respondents' decisions not to return were a) financial reasons, b) family reasons, c) conflicts with employment, and d) new employment opportunities. Many of these respondents faced demands on their energy, personal finances, and time that competed with continuing their education. When faced with these competing demands, many of the respondents opted to stop their education. On a positive note, many of the respondents who stated that their present life circumstances prevented them from returning indicated that they planned on returning to NVCC in the future.

Some of the respondents indicated "personal reasons" for not returning to NVCC such as a lack of connection to the College or feeling "invisible" on campus. These are reasons the College can address through retention strategies that help integrate students both academically and socially at the College.

A smaller proportion of respondents did not return to NVCC because they had academic problems or were dissatisfied with NVCC services or instruction. The College may be in a better position to address these issues, than those related to students' personal circumstances. Examining these reasons may help the College identify areas for improvement that will benefit students.

NVCC Findings in Relation to Other National Retention Studies

Positive Retention Rates

Ernest Pascarella, a major theorist on student retention, stated there are several steps which organizations must take in order to produce effective retention programs. Some of these steps include having retention efforts pervasive throughout the entire organization, continuous research on student retention, and identifying specific factors affecting retention. Pascarella also states that it is important for organizations to realize that not all attrition is negative. Many students who enroll at community colleges intend to transfer to other institutions, in which case attrition is considered positive.

Pascarella's theory is important in relation to the findings from the NVCC Non-Returning Student Survey. Overall, 9% of the respondents stated the single most important reason for not returning to NVCC was because they had transferred to another school. This type of student attrition is positive in nature because these students continued their education. In addition, 8% of the survey respondents stated they did not return because they had achieved their educational goals. This demonstrates that NVCC is assisting some students in accomplishing short-term goals. It is important to discover the reasons why students do not continue their enrollment at an institution in order to assess the extent to which attrition is negative or positive.

Student Goals and Retention Rates

In their article, "Staying in College: Moderators of the Relation Between Intention and Institutional Departure," Okun and Benin state that some of the best indicators of retention are students with higher GPA's at enrollment, intention to persist at entrance, and enrollment in several courses. These same factors also appeared to be good indicators of student retention rates at NVCC. When retention rates for first-time students were analyzed by degree intention, approximately 61% of the students who intended on obtaining a degree were retained. This compares to a retention rate of approximately 48% for students who had no degree intention upon enrolling at NVCC. Retention rates were also analyzed by the number of semesters the students intended to enroll at NVCC. Students who indicated they would attend NVCC for three to four semesters had retention rates of approximately 65%. This compares to a retention rate of approximately 30% for students who indicated they would enroll at NVCC for one semester. In each of these cases, retention rates could be predicted according to the students' intention to persist at entrance.

Similar to intention to persist, enrollment in several courses was also a good indicator of student retention rates at NVCC. Full-time students (those enrolled in 12 or more credit hours) had higher retention rates than part-time students. Specifically, the retention rate for full-time students was approximately 75% compared to part-time students who had retention rates of approximately 45%. The Okun and Benin theory, that student retention levels can be predicted by enrollment in several courses, was reflected in the NVCC analysis of first-time students.

External Factors Influencing Retention Rates

According to Steven Jones in his article titled "No Magic Required: Reducing Freshman Attrition at the Community College," students enrolled in community colleges are four times more likely to leave the school due to non-academic reasons than for academic reasons (15). The findings from the Non-Returning Student Survey agreed with this theory. Specifically, approximately 3% of the respondents stated academic reasons were the single most important factor in their decision not to return to NVCC. In contrast, 15% of the respondents cited family or personal circumstances as their primary reason for not returning. Overall, the findings from the Non-Returning Student Survey indicated that approximately 48% of the respondents did not return to NVCC due to personal circumstances. This area included such things as family commitments, conflicts with employment, and new employment opportunities. It is more difficult for formal retention programs developed by NVCC to assist students in these areas than in academic or other areas under the College's control.

Respondents to the telephone survey who cited personal circumstances as reasons for not returning most often explained that various responsibilities unrelated to school prevented them from returning. "Work, children, and illness in the family" were the reasons for not returning given by one respondent, illustrating the multiple roles of many survey respondents. Several respondents stated that their various responsibilities hardly left them time to attend class, let alone study. In addition to family and personal responsibilities, many respondents cited conflict with employment as a main reason for not returning. Work-related reasons for not returning generally fell into two categories: scheduling conflicts, and a lack of time for meeting the obligations of both work and school. These findings and others from the telephone survey confirmed Steven Jones' finding that students enrolled at community colleges are more likely to discontinue enrollment because of non-academic reasons than because of academic reasons.

Student Connection with the School

According to Florence Brawer, the more academically and socially involved students are with an institution, the more likely they will persist with their academic studies. Overall, Brawer stated that academic integration is more important than social integration for students enrolled at two-year community colleges. This is because classrooms are typically the only place for social integration at community colleges. Academic integration should be strong in the classroom because students do not have access to as many social activities and groups as do students at four-year institutions.

Brawer's theory of academic integration was exemplified in the analysis conducted at NVCC. First-time students who were program placed had higher retention rates than non-program placed students. Over 60% of the program placed students returned to NVCC as compared to approximately 50% of the non-program placed students. Among the students who were program placed, students enrolled in a program leading to an Associate in Science degree had the highest retention rate (65%). It can be seen that NVCC students who were academically integrated within a curriculum had higher retention rates than other students.

Student Age and Retention Rates

Retention patterns have been shown to vary according to the age of the student. As compared to younger students, adult students differ in their primary goals of attending a college or university. Retention definitions should reflect the various goals of students according to their age and purpose of enrollment. Research findings have shown that adult student persistence is affected by factors such as time management, family and work needs, and logistics. These factors may have less influence on retention rates for younger students. According to Pappas and Loring, retention for adult students should be defined as achieving their stated objectives, which may or may not include obtaining a degree (Kerka 2).

Data gathered from the NVCC Non-Returning Student Survey reflected differences in retention according to student age. For respondents between 18 to 24 years of age, the most important reason for not returning was finance related. However, older respondents (between 25 to 44 years of age), gave both conflicts with employment and family/personal circumstances more often as reasons for not returning. It appears that as the respondent's age increased, financial barriers decreased but family or personal barriers grew. Programs and efforts to improve retention rates should take into consideration that barriers in attending college could differ based upon the age of the student.

When retention rates were analyzed for three cohorts of NVCC first-time students, differences also emerged according to age. Students 21 years of age and younger had retention rates of approximately 66%. This compares to students 45 years of age and older who had retention rates of 40%. Again, older students may have had barriers to their education that did not exist for younger students. Family and personal circumstances may have prevented more older students from returning than younger students. Determining the educational goals of older students could help the College better assess the rate of positive attrition. Perhaps many of the students 45 years of age and older did not return to NVCC because they had achieved their goals.

Influences of Financial Aid on Retention Rates

Fourteen percent of the respondents to the Non-Returning Student Survey stated financial circumstances were the main reason for not returning to NVCC. In addition, many of the responses to the open-ended questions on the Non-Returning Student Survey pertained to financial issues. When the responses to the survey were analyzed by the race of the respondents, differences emerged. Approximately 13% of the White respondents stated that financial reasons were the most important factor in their decision not to return to NVCC. This compares to 20% of the Hispanic respondents who indicated financial circumstances were the primary reason for not returning.

The results of the NVCC survey closely parallel the findings from a study conducted by Amaury Nora. In the article titled "Campus-Based Aid Programs as Determinants of Retention Among Hispanic Community College Students," Nora states that both financial aid and academic support strongly influence retention rates for Hispanic students. The findings from the study indicated that Hispanic students discontinue college enrollment because of financial reasons more often than for academic reasons. Nora recommends that financial aid opportunities and packages be marketed strongly, especially to minority students.

SECTION III:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT IN STUDENT RETENTION AT NVCC

Section III: Recommendations for Improvement in Student Retention at NVCC

In order to improve student retention at NVCC, comprehensive programs need to be developed and implemented at the College. Through studies conducted by the Office of Institutional Research, several key findings and trends regarding student retention at NVCC have been determined. These findings should be the basis of programs aimed at increasing student retention and assisting continuing students. By identifying factors affecting student retention at the College, programs can be strengthened or initiated in order to help students continue at NVCC.

One of the major findings from the Non-Returning Student Survey (both mail and telephone) and focus groups was that students felt that NVCC did not provide them with enough information about the College. This included providing timely, accurate, and readily available information regarding College services and processes. Many students who did not return to the College indicated that an increased availability of information would have been helpful to them in their efforts to continue at NVCC.

In order to help improve retention, various NVCC offices need to ensure that students have information regarding services available to them. This includes such areas as academic, personal and career counseling, placement testing, financial aid, admissions and records, and academic and social support services. The manner in which critical information is disseminated should be evaluated and strengthened to benefit students (particularly new students). NVCC offices need to determine whether students are actually using and easily accessing information regarding services that are necessary for their success at the College. It should also be noted that various techniques or strategies to improve the dissemination of information might vary from campus to campus. Efforts to improve retention should be suited to particular offices and NVCC campuses.

Other efforts to improve the availability of information to students include developing a new student orientation package. A product such as this could include information on admissions and records services, placement testing, counseling services, tutoring information, financial aid information, parking information, library services and hours, and other critical services. By providing a simple, easy-to-read orientation package, many new students may feel more comfortable and be able to make the transition into college.

A second important finding regarding student retention at NVCC was that a disproportional number of Hispanic students are not returning to the College due to financial reasons. As stated earlier, approximately 20% of the Hispanic respondents gave financial circumstances as the most important reason for not returning to NVCC. This compares to 13% of the White respondents, 15% of the Black respondents, and 14% of the Asian respondents who gave financial circumstances as the most important reason for not returning. This NVCC finding supports other national studies, which have found that Hispanic students more often discontinue college enrollment because of financial reasons than for academic reasons.

In order to improve the retention of Hispanic students at NVCC, greater efforts must be made to ensure that Hispanic students know about the types of financial aid available and how to apply for aid. NVCC marketing efforts aimed at prospective Hispanic students should emphasize the opportunities for financial aid that are available so that individuals with inadequate funds for education are aware that they might be eligible for student loans, grants, or scholarships.

In addition to assisting Hispanic students, efforts should be made to improve the retention of Black students at NVCC. National studies have indicated that support from the institution appears to be a critical factor in retaining Black students. Students need to have a sense of belonging to NVCC based on their interaction with faculty, counselors, and student associations that are sensitive to their needs.

A third finding from the retention studies conducted at NVCC was that approximately 62% of the

respondents did not return to the College due to their current life circumstances. The most frequently stated life circumstances that influenced respondents' decisions not to return included financial reasons, family reasons, conflicts with employment, and new employment opportunities. Time, money, and family commitments led many students to temporarily stop their education. Many of the respondents who cited life circumstances for not returning indicated they planned to return to NVCC in the future. The challenge to NVCC will be to expand its efforts in assisting students who must balance family and/or work obligations with school.

As found in several national studies, not all student attrition is negative for an institution. This is particularly true for community colleges, with open enrollment policies and large populations of adult students. Almost one-fifth of the respondents to the Non-Returning Student Survey had either transferred to another institution or had achieved their academic goals. This is an important factor that should be incorporated into retention programs at NVCC. Efforts to increase "positive attrition" can be done by offering as many courses as possible at convenient locations and times, allowing more students to pursue their academic objectives. Students who plan to transfer should receive guidance on what program of study to follow at NVCC and should be aware of the transfer articulation agreements that NVCC has with various four-year institutions. The ability for students to easily access information on transferring to other institutions should be a key component in retention efforts at NVCC.

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NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

COLLEGE MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of Northern Virginia Community College is to respond to the educational needs of its dynamic and diverse constituencies through an array of comprehensive programs and services that facilitate learning and workforce development in an environment of open access and through lifelong educational opportunities.

To achieve this mission, the following strategic goals for 2001-2003 are established:

Goal 1:
To provide a diverse, highly qualified, energetic, and dynamic faculty and staff dedicated to and enhancing student success.

Goal 2:
To develop and acquire adequate fiscal, capital, and community resources and to use them efficiently and effectively to provide the physical environment and tools necessary to assure student success.

Goal 3:
To provide an array of quality support services that enhance student success.

Goal 4:
To provide an instructional program that is accessible, affordable, and educationally sound that supports the needs of a diverse student body and enhances student success.

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[1] See OIR Report No. 13-00 "NVCC Non-Returning Student Survey Report" for more detailed information.

[2] See OIR Report No. 18-00 "Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC: Telephone Survey and Focus Group Findings" for more detailed information.

[3] See OIR Report No. 6-00 "Retention Patterns of NVCC First-Time Students by Selected Characteristics" for more detailed information.

[4] Open enrollment was defined as admitting all high school graduates, to capacity.

[5] See OIR report, "Retention Patterns of NVCC First-Time Students by Selected Characteristics, No. 6-00" for a detailed description of the analysis.

[6] See OIR report titled, "Non-Returning Student Survey Report, No. 13-00" for detailed information.

[7] See OIR Report 18-00 "Reasons for Not Returning to NVCC: Telephone Survey and Focus Group Findings" for more detailed information.

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